



Marine Safety Information Bulletin

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FULL IMPLEMENTATION OF GLOBAL MARITIME DISTRESS AND SAFETY SYSTEM (GMDSS)

On February 1, 1999, the FCC regulations regarding GMDSS that were published nearly seven years ago will be fully implemented. The following outlines the Coast Guard policy for ensuring compliance in the maritime industry.

Which vessels must comply?

- Cargo ships, 300 GT and over on Oceans and Coastwise voyages
- Passenger ships on Oceans, Coastwise, or International voyages
- Small passenger vessels on unrestricted international voyages
- Self-propelled MODU's 300 gross ton and over

What evidence of compliance is required?

- For U. S. flag vessels, compliance will be established by possession of a valid FCC Radiotelephony Certificate. Vessels experiencing difficulty arranging for GMDSS installations should request an emergency extension from the appropriate FCC field office. Exemption certificates will be required where appropriate. COI's will not be issued or endorsed without a valid Radiotelephony Certificate, exemption or extension.
- For Foreign flag vessels, boarding officers will have a Navigation and Vessel Inspection Circular (NVIC) outlining the equipment required by GMDSS. They will verify that the vessel is properly equipped, or exempted by their flag administration from required equipment. Due to the different standards for issuance of SOLAS Safety Radiotelephony certificates throughout the world, the possession of a Safety Radiotelephony Certificate alone will not serve as verification of compliance. Any missing equipment should be accompanied by an exemption. If no exemption or extension for non-compliance is provided, the vessel will be required to demonstrate compliance at the next U. S. port call, or May 1, 1999, whichever is earlier. No extensions will be accepted on EPIRBS.

Questions regarding GMDSS requirements may be directed to LCDR Cafferty at (202) 267-2451.

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